

Message Text

SECRET

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ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 /026 W
-----100749 130546Z /14

R 130512Z SEP 78
FM AMEMBASSY BANGKOK
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 0869
INFO AMCONSUL HONG KONG
AMEMBASSY JAKARTA
AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR
AMEMBASSY MANILA
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE
AMEMBASSY TOKYO
AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE
USLO PEKING

S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 02 BANGKOK 26468

EXDIS

EO 11652: GDS
TAGS: MILI, VM, CB, PDIP
SUBJECT: THE SITUATION IN INDOCHINA

REF: A. STATE 184093, B. STATE 224189

1. WE HIGHLY APPRECIATE THE ANALYSIS CONTAINED IN
REFTELS WHICH WE EMBODIED IN AN AIDE MEMOIRE (REF B)
AND PASSED TO THAI MFA SEPTEMBER 5. WE REGARD OUR
EXCHANGES OF INFO ON INDOCHINA OVER THE PAST MONTHS AS
VERY HELPFUL IN OUR POLITICAL RELATIONS WITH THE THAIS.
WE HAVE ALREADY NOTED IMPROVEMENT IN THE THAI RESPONSE
IN OUR DIALOGUE. WE WOULD WELCOME A SIMILAR PIECE
EVERY FOUR MONTHS OR SO.

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2. WE AGREE WITH THE ANALYSIS OF THE INDOCHINA SITUATION
IN REF B IN WHICH THE WEAKNESSES OF THE POL POT REGIME,
PEKING'S DELEMMA AND HANOI'S INTENTIONS WERE MADE VERY
CLEAR. WE WOULD LIKE TO HIGHLIGHT FURTHER A POINT MADE
BUT NOT STRESSED IN THE ANALYSIS: THAT HANOI'S POSITION
OF SEEMING MILITARY STRENGTH VIS-A-VIS KAMPUCHEA MASKS
SERIOUS WEAKNESSES IN ITS OVERALL POSITION, PARTICULARLY

ITS DIPLOMATIC ONE, AND TRAVELS BY PHAM VAN DONG ARE PART OF AN URGENT EFFORT TO IMPROVE ITS INTERNATIONAL STANDING.

3. DESPITE INTERNATIONAL SUPPORT FOR HANOI DURING THE INDOCHINA WAR AND SRV LINKS WITH THE NON-ALIGNED WORLD, HANOI CAN COUNT ON ONLY THE SOVIET BLOC FOR SUPPORT IN THE REGION IN ITS CURRENT DIFFICULTIES, BOTH WITH KAMPUCHEA AND THE PRC. THE ASEAN STATES, THAILAND FOREMOST, WANT KAMPUCHEA TO REMAIN INDEPENDENT OF VIETNAM-- A VIEW SHARED BY THE OTHER EFFECTIVE REGIONAL POWERS, THE PRC, JAPAN AND THE UNITED STATES. DESPITE MISGIVINGS ABOUT PEKING'S OVERSEAS CHINESE POLICIES, THE ASEAN STATES, AND AGAIN THAILAND FOREMOST, ALSO HOPE THAT THE PRC CAN ACT AS A RESTRAINT ON VIETNAM IN PURSUING ANY REGIONAL AMBITIONS. THE ASEAN STATES ALSO AGREE WITH PEKING THAT VIETNAMESE OBJECTIVES PARALLEL SOVIET INTERESTS IN THE REGION. MOREOVER, THE CLOSER VIETNAM IS SEEN TO BE MOVING TOWARD MOSCOW, THE MORE WARY ASEAN WILL BECOME OF HANOI, SINCE THE SOVIETS ARE REGARDED WITH PROFOUND DISTRUST AND DISTASTE, CERTAINLY HERE IN THAILAND, BUT, WE BELIEVE, THROUGHOUT THE ASEAN AREA.

4. THE PRESSURE ON THE ASEAN STATES FOR VISITS BY PHAM VAN DONG REPRESENTS VIETNAMESE EFFORTS TO IMPROVE RELATIONS WITH THE ASEAN COUNTRIES, BUT IT ALSO REFLECTS
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THE RECOGNITION BY HANOI THAT WITH THE EXCEPTION OF LAOS THE SRV IS ISOLATED IN THE REGION. THIS ISOLATION LOOMS LARGE GIVEN VIETNAMESE TROUBLES WITH PEKING.

5. HANOI, IN EFFECT, FELT COMPELLED TO TAKE THE INITIATIVE WITH ASEAN LEADERS, FORCING A TIMETABLE FOR DONG'S VISITS ON THEM AND PROPOSING AN AGENDA WHICH THE ASEAN GOVERNMENTS FOUND UNACCEPTABLE, I.E., SIGNATURE OF PEACE AND FRIENDSHIP TREATIES AND ACCEPTANCE OF HANOI'S VERSION OF A ZONE OF PEACE, INDEPENDENCE AND NEUTRALITY. THESE DISPARITIES IN PERCEPTIONS OF WHAT IS POSSIBLE, WHAT IS DESIRED, AND AN APPROPRIATE PACE OF DEVELOPING RELATIONS MAY HAVE BEEN DIMINISHED BY THEIR FAILURE TO OBTAIN ANY OF THEIR DEMANDS DURING PHAM VAN DONG'S VISIT TO THAILAND.

6. AT THE SAME TIME, HANOI HAS DOMESTIC DIFFICULTIES WHICH INTERTWINE INTIMATELY WITH ITS INTERNATIONAL PROBLEMS. ECONOMIC STAGNATION IN THE SOUTH, THE COSTS OF "SOCIALIST TRANSFORMATION" WITH ATTENDANT SOCIAL DISRUPTIONS, LOSS OF AID FROM THE PRC, AND THE INEPT USE OF ECONOMIC AND TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE FROM ABROAD HAVE

HELPED PRODUCE A SORRY ECONOMIC PICTURE FOR THE SRV. THE CONFLICT WITH KAMPUCHEA AND THE ECONOMICALLY DISLOCATIVE TENSIONS AND PROBLEMS WITH PEKING HAVE SERIOUSLY COMPOUNDED HANOI'S ECONOMIC DISTRESS.

7. HANOI'S TROUBLES WITH PEKING WILL INTENSIFY THE DEMANDS OF DEFENSE ON RESOURCES. IT COULD ALSO AFFECT HANOI'S DETERMINED EFFORTS TO OBTAIN NON-COMMUNIST ECONOMIC SUPPORT. AT LEAST SOME NON-COMMUNIST COUNTRIES--NOTABLY THE JAPANESE--ARE LIKELY TO BE INCREASINGLY CAUTIOUS IN EXTENDING CREDITS AND IMPLEMENTING ASSISTANCE

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EXDIS

EFFORTS IN LIGHT OF ESCALATING SINO-VIETNAMESE HOSTILITY
AND PRC EFFORTS TO ISOLATE HANOI.

8. NONE OF THE ABOVE IS SAID TO DISCREDIT THE THREAT TO KAMPUCHEA OF HANOI'S ACTIVITIES. BECAUSE OF THE UNIQUE-NESS OF DEMOCRATIC KAMPUCHEA, WE HAVE LITTLE SOLID INFORMATION ON WHICH TO BASE AN ANALYSIS OF WHEN AND HOW THE KAMPUCHEAN SOCIETY AND POWER STRUCTURE MIGHT UNRAVEL. AT THE SAME TIME, WE SHOULD KEEP IN MIND THAT HANOI HAS MORE DIFFICULTIES THAN JUST THE TEST OF ITS MILITARY

PROWESS AGAINST THE KAMPUCHEAN MILITARY AND SOCIETAL
STRUCTURE. THE AWARENESS OF THESE INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL
DIFFICULTIES FACING THE SRV HAS CONTRIBUTED HEAVILY TO
DONG'S TRAVELING. HANOI IS NOT ABLE TO EXTRACT MUCH
BENEFIT FROM ITS PREEMINENT MILITARY POWER IN SOUTHEAST
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